

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Summer 2006

Assemblyman David Townsend Named "Conservationist of the Year"

Assemblyman David R. Townsend, who represents residents of Oneida Lake's north and east shores in the 115th District, was named "conservationist of the year" at the OLA's annual meeting in April.

Assemblyman Townsend has been a tremendous, invaluable friend of Oneida Lake, the OLA, and New York State conservation in general. His efforts were instrumental in expediting the successful cormorant control program that Oneida Lake now enjoys. In addition, he championed the association's fight to protect the lake's walleye population during the forthcoming expanded bass seasons.

Townsend's conservation legacy extends beyond Oneida Lake's shores, however. The Assemblyman received the Teddy Roosevelt Conservation award in 1992 for his sponsorship of bills concerning the recycling issue and his successful effort to keep the Pixley Falls State Park and the Oriskany Battlefield and Steuben Memorial State Historic Sites open, after the Parks Department cut them from their budget.

David Townsend, who worked in law enforcement for twenty-four years before being elected to the Assembly in 1990, is a member of that legislative body's Labor and Local Government committees. He is the ranking Republican member on the Codes Committee and has also served on the Rules, Correction, Transportation, Safety in the Workplace, and Environmental Conservation Committees. A believer in accountability, Townsend is

the only member of the Assembly to have never missed a vote. He has cast over 24,000 consecutive ballots since he was elected sixteen years ago.

David Townsend embodies the OLA's ideals of public and environmental service. We are pleased and honored to name him to our elite group of Central New York conservationists.



OLA Vice President Tom Pierce congratulates Assemblyman David Townsend.

The Oneida Lake Profile

The OLA is pleased to announce the publication of the third edition of "The Oneida Lake Profile." This richly illustrated pamphlet presents an overview of Oneida Lake history, but its main thrust is an in-depth discussion of the lake's biology, with emphasis on the ecological interaction of fish, aquatic insects, plants, and nutrients within the lake. Changes brought about by invasive species such as double-crested cormorants and zebra mussels are highlighted. In addition, the "Profile" lists new organisms that may enter Oneida Lake and discusses their potential impacts.

Unlike its predecessors, this "Profile" will be accessible on-line. Simply go to Google and type "Oneida Lake Profile" in the search box, or use the web address <http://www.oneidalakeinitiative.org>. The on-line version is in color, the hard copy in black and white.

President's Message

The walleye fishing has been fantastic; some have said that this might be one of the best seasons ever. I hope all of you have been able to get out and fish. I noticed large numbers of "young of the year" yellow perch the other day while wading with my grandchildren. As you know, walleyes will soon feed on these fish (and small gizzard shad, if available) and the fishing might become more difficult. Enjoy this great angling while you can.

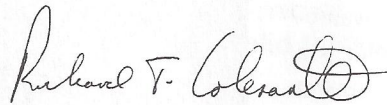
Have you noticed the low cormorant numbers on the lake? I've seen very few during my fishing trips. This means that predation on our walleyes, perch, and bass will be minimal. Credit the group responsible for hazing our lake's cormorants. Rich Chipman and his Department of Agriculture-Wildlife Services staff continue to do a superb job.

It appears that most of our members understood that dues had to increase from \$3 to \$5. I was a little concerned about that, but our current membership equals last year's. We all need to do more to continue growth in this area.

A larger membership means increased political clout, which drives OLA efforts. Your board of directors is planning a mailing to selected addresses around the lake to build membership. Take your additional membership cards and sign up friends. Make the OLA stronger.

Your board of directors will be addressing the following issues in the near future: a revision of the OLA's by-laws; enhanced public fishing access on the east end of the lake; an examination of fish population forecasts with regards to recent changes in the lake; growing our membership; and spearheading an initiative to obtain funding for the renovation of the Sylvan Beach Pier (please note the article in this Bulletin).

I wish you a safe and happy summer.



Richard Colesante
President - Oneida Lake Association

Snowmobile Registration Laws

Two laws have been introduced into the Senate and the Assembly of the NYS Legislature that could benefit hunters, fishermen, and trappers who use snowmobiles solely for these purposes, while not using formal and maintained snowmobile trails.

Senator Jim Wright introduced bill number S-7915 and Assemblyman Bill Magee introduced bill number A-11470. Both bills addressed the snowmobile issue. At our June meeting, the OLA Board of Directors voted unanimously to support this new legislation, which would reduce the cost of annual snowmobile registration from \$100 to \$25 for sportsmen who opt for the non-trail registration.

If you wish to encourage these bills' passage, contact your elected state officials and mention that you support the proposed laws.

State the specific bill numbers. Action on this legislation is expected in the fall session.

The Oneida Lake Association Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc. so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the Association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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OLA By-laws Rewritten

It's been a long time coming, but the OLA board of directors has recently revamped the association's by-laws to reflect needed changes. The existing by-laws had been in place for nearly fifty years! Details will be forthcoming in the Spring 2007 *Bulletin*.

The OLA Fishing Corner



RIPPLES

Summer Tips from Captain Ray

Captain Ray Brown and his charters have been enjoying outstanding walleye angling this season. The *Bulletin* contacted Captain Ray and recorded several of his tips for successful summer walleye fishing:

Expect Oneida Lake's walleyes to bite very lightly. Strong jigging strokes will usually produce few hits. Instead, move or bounce the jigs slowly. Simply dragging them along the bottom can produce fine results. Gentle lifts with your rod tips also work. Walleyes in summer often just pick up the jig; they don't strike like they do in cooler weather. If you feel any added weight, set the hook. Half and five-eighths ounce jigs work well in deeper waters. Black and purple jigs are my "bread and butter" lures. Sweeten each jig with a piece of night crawler.

You'd be amazed at the number of walleyes - big walleyes - that hang around the lake's thick weed beds. If you want to catch these fish, you must first find the

right vegetation. Weed beds with lots of baitfish - small yellow perch, buckeyes, or shad - are just the ticket. Find clear pockets in these weeds and work three-eighths and half ounce black and purple jigs through them. Often, you'll get your jig stuck in the weeds. Don't get frustrated. Pull the jig out of the weeds, rebait it with part of a crawler, and continue jigging. I've caught excellent walleyes in these environments. Sometimes, weeds that grow in only three to five feet of water contain trophy fish.

On windy days, you can drift over the thick weeds and vertically jig the open pockets. You might only get a couple jigs in one pocket, but you can hook up with some nice fish.

When I drift for walleyes, I use Dixie spinners. Red and white combinations, and solid chartreuse Dixies, produce the best results.

Good fishing to all Oneida Lake anglers this summer!

Don't be surprised if Oneida Lake experiences algae blooms this year. June's heavy rains undoubtedly washed additional nutrients from farmers' fields into the lake's tributaries. Nutrients, especially phosphorus, encourage algae growth. Even though algae can be a nuisance, it's an incredibly important one. These tiny plants are the basis for Oneida's incredibly productive food web.

Sign Up A Friend With the OLA!

Sylvan Beach hosts the annual "Canal Fest" on August 12-13. Free entertainment, craftspersons and vendors in the village park, and a boat parade in the Barge Canal highlight this lively weekend. The Beach also sponsors its 31st Annual Antique Car Show on August 20, in the park. Vintage vehicles shine amidst the village's comforting shade.

Practice Safe Boating - Obey the Rules of the Road!

Congratulations to the staff at the Cornell University Biological Field Station, who celebrated that research facility's 50th anniversary this summer. The Field Station, housed in buildings of the former Charles Brown "Xandria" estate, investigates Oneida Lake's biological mysteries.

"Catch and Release" - A Renewing Angling Philosophy!

During the past year, the plight of Constantia's historic Congregational Church, troubled by a declining membership and difficult finances, received extensive publicity. This beautiful, Greek revival structure, located on Frederick Street, will host Jack Henke's lecture, "Local History of the Oneida Lake Region," on August 8 at 7 p.m.. There is no admission. Henke will also speak about Sylvan Beach's history at that village's Union Chapel on Sunday, August 6 at 7 p.m.

Other Fishing News

Summer means perch fishing on Oneida Lake - especially white perch. These fish, the lake's most underexploited resource, swim in huge schools and bite aggressively, especially during the last hour of sunlight. Look for whites around the lake's rock reefs - Messenger's Shoals, Shackleton Shoals, and the Oneida Creek Bar are proven hotspots. Use pieces of nightcrawlers for bait. Whites easily steal whole worms, but small baits often catch multiple fish.

Remember - there's no limit on white perch. Keep them all. Their population needs to be thinned. Whites compete for food with walleyes and yellow perch. White perch also make for delicious eating and, with their aggressiveness, are probably Oneida Lake's best "kid-pleasing" fish.

Some anglers mistakenly believe that jack perch only bite during the fall. Savvy Oneida Lakers look for jacks in summer, checking weed bed edges and shoals. Crawfish and small worms are excellent baits. Deep-water trollers often take jacks using small flutter spoons, fished with lead-core line.

Update: The Sylvan Beach Pier

The Sylvan Beach “pier,” a concrete jetty that extends from the Beach’s shore 2200 feet southwesterly into Oneida Lake, was constructed in 1907 as a part of New York State’s Barge Canal project. The pier sheltered Sylvan Beach harbor, providing safe anchorage for the hundreds of tugs and barges that used the canal. It also kept the harbor from being filled with Oneida Lake’s shifting sands. A two hundred yard long “rock pile” at the pier’s end gave additional protection.

Originally, the pier was not intended to be a recreational site, but its location amidst the lake’s east shore shelving beach transformed it into an ideal public fishing access spot. “West winds are best,” said Oneida’s old-time anglers, and the pier’s history proved this. Strong westerlies drove baitfish to the east shore, followed by walleyes, smallmouths, and silver bass. Hundreds of anglers made the pier their favorite spot and used it to harvest impressive catches of these fish. Night fishers took bullheads, catfish, and more walleyes from the pier’s lakeside shallows. The pier’s fishing fraternity thrived and their exploits created enduring legends.

Time wasn’t kind to the Sylvan Beach pier, however. Wave action and ice erosion took their tolls and New York closed the pier to angling in the 1960s. The deaths of two sportsmen, who were swept from the pier, also influenced state action. Prompted by pressure from the Oneida Lake Association and the Village of Sylvan Beach, the state refurbished and reopened a one hundred yard section of the pier, adjoining Sylvan Beach’s lakefront park, in 1975. The rest of the jetty continued to deteriorate and became a crumbled concrete eyesore.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers completed a feasibility study for restoring the Sylvan Beach pier in 2000. The Corps concluded that the pier could be rebuilt for about \$8 million (estimates have inflated since then and now hover around \$10 million). The Corps completed



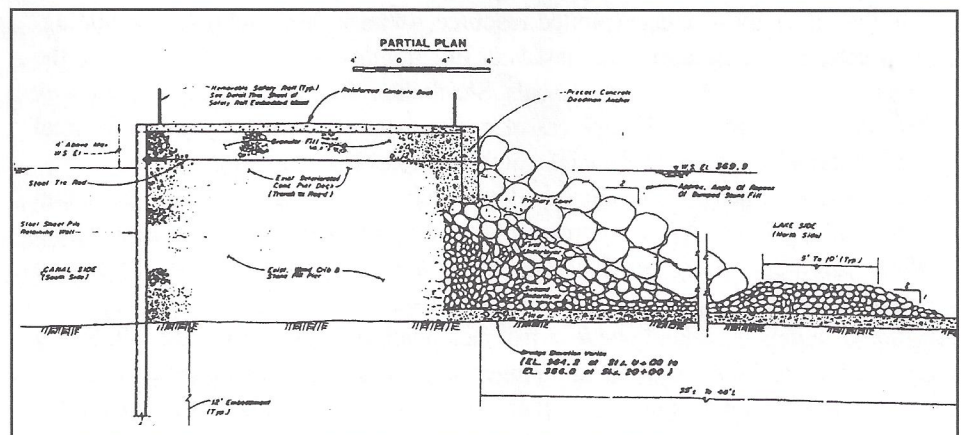
Tourists and anglers enjoy the Sylvan Beach pier, around 1920.

a scoping report, environmental impact statement, and a design study for the project. The latter included five alternatives, ranging from a basic “rubblemound (rockpile) jetty” topped with a concrete cap to a “precast concrete pier,” highlighted by a “bridge-type decking resting on supported beams,” protected by a submerged rubblemound structure on the north side (note the illustration below).

At this writing, the Sylvan Beach Pier project rests in limbo. The Corps has committed to half of the funding. The remainder must come from what the Corps calls a “local sponsor,” in this case the New York State Canal Corporation, which runs the state’s canal system. A Corps spokesman informed the *Bulletin* that, if the

Canal Corporation sent a “letter of intent” to fund the pier, final plans and specifications could be completed by the end of 2007 and construction could proceed in 2008. At this writing, the Canal Corporation has made no funding commitment.

The Sylvan Beach Pier could become the ultimate Oneida Lake public access facility. Walkers and joggers, birders and photographers, local folk and tourists, and anglers of all interests would flock to the pier. Thousands, perhaps tens of thousands, would enjoy the jetty annually. Indeed, the pier could be viewed not only as a local asset, but rather as a wise investment in a better quality of life for all New Yorkers.



A cross-section drawing of one of the Army Corps of Engineers’ pier restoration options.

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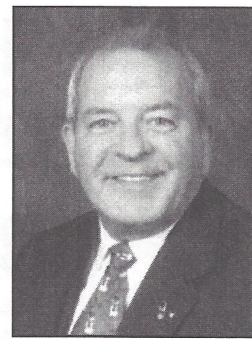
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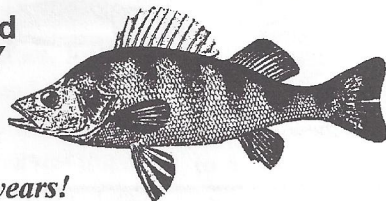
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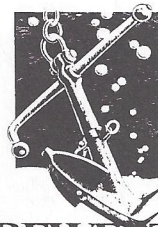
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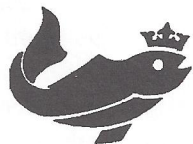
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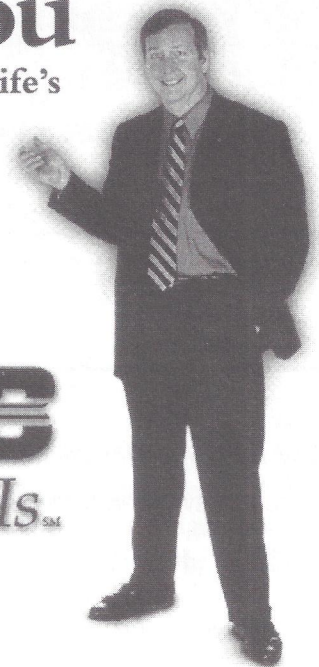
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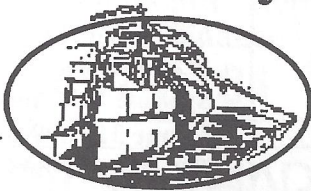
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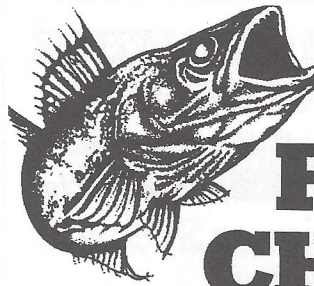
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